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Practicalities and Possibilities: PAR Research in Counseling with Sex Workers

Cover Page Footnote

The author would like to acknowledge the sex workers involved in counseling research and their patience with social scientists. Thank you.

Practicalities and Possibilities: PAR Research in Counseling with Sex Workers

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Scholars have increasingly documented that a participatory action research (PAR) paradigm can strengthen learning about sex workers' experiences. Many counseling researchers, however, may not be prepared for various contextual factors and experiences that can occur when doing PAR with sex workers. In addition, sex workers' experiences of oppression and marginalization necessitate that counselors adapt their research methods to engage with this community. The author of this article discusses important process elements of PAR research with sex workers to identify methodological practices for counseling researchers engaging in PAR with sex workers. Implications for training with counseling researchers across the professional lifespan are discussed.

Keywords: participatory action research, social justice, research process, sexuality research, community-based research

Introduction

An increasing volume of literature (e.g., [Cook, Levy, & Whitehouse, 2020](#); [Shamrova & Cummings, 2017](#)) supports that participatory action research (PAR) is a paradigm of inquiry that is being used with communities, cultures, and systemic social issues that have been noticeably absent from counseling and psychology research. PAR is also a research paradigm that can apply to quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research. The process of PAR entails a series of steps that vary slightly across different disciplines and researchers. Some PAR researchers note a four-step process that includes a) initiation of research with participants as co-researchers; b) identification of a research focus that focuses on positive social change; c) collaborative data collection and analysis; and d) evaluation of the research study's impact on positive social change ([Canlas & Karpudewan, 2020](#)). Other researchers utilize a slightly varied 4-step model that includes: (1) participatory ethics; (2) from theory to PAR praxis; (3) community-based research and collective inquiry for social mobilization purposes; and (4) enacting action in PAR for social justice ([Ritterbusch, 2019](#), p. 1304). Many current PAR researchers use this slightly revised model widely, and it has become a best practice within the research literature ([Burns, Howard, & Ospina, 2021](#)).

Increasingly, scholars in counseling have begun to use PAR with "at-risk" communities. Literature in various mental health disciplines uses the term "high risk" to identify specific groups who have disproportionate rates of mental health symptoms and a theorized lack of resilience, and who need intervention related to their vulnerability ([Burnes, 2014](#); [Harpine, 2019](#)). Researchers have begun to use PAR

as a way to understand more about what keeps these "at-risk" communities from connecting with their own resilience. In this process, many PAR researchers have noted a need to reframe "at-risk" due to its roots in oppressive and marginalizing language. For example, the term "at-risk" can signify a community's absence of financial resource, its being prone to violence that they themselves do not instigate, and a "resistance" to oppressive ideologies of "reform." These constructions of "at-risk" have roots in classicism and colonization. In contrast, a newer framework increasingly juxtaposes risk with resilience, encouraging more empirical inquiry about resilience in these communities ([Hornor, 2017](#)). These shifts exemplify how PAR is a lens that guides ethical and empowering research through its accurate framing of resilience and multicultural humility.

PAR is also a needed research framework for studies within human sexuality in part due to its use of empowerment and collaboration to combat stigma, shame, and erotophobia ([Abma et al., 2018](#)). PAR empowers people in many areas of sexuality to co-construct the formation of new knowledge with researchers. Such collaboration provides more accu-

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rate information about stigmatized areas of sexuality and prioritizes spaces for voices of a variety of sexual identities and experiences that are often silenced. Further, although PAR researchers increasingly have documented the content of these collaborative studies in sexuality, they have yet to document the *process* of their research (O'Neill, 2010). Specifically, sexuality researchers have called for writings that highlight the process of research *with*, rather than *on*, communities (Zeglin, Van Dam, & Hergenrather, 2017).

One such sexuality-focused topic where there is a notable absence about the process of PAR research is with participants who are sex workers. Weatherall and Priestley (2001) defined sex work as one or several services in which sex is exchanged for money or goods. In addition, other authors have more recently described sex work distinctly from sexual identities and sexual orientation as jobs including street-based work, camming, sugar relationships, working independently, stripping, massage parlors, burlesque, and phone sex (Burnes & Dawson, 2023). As expression of sexuality often develops within a context of culture and environment (Alexander, 2019), expressions of sex work have evolved in terms of location, social organization, services rendered, and resulting systemic reactions. For example, current definitions often have not included certain types of sex work, including mobile phone app work (e.g., using mobile phone dating applications such as Tindr or Grindr to solicit sex in exchange for money or goods).

Although the prevalence of sex work-related phenomena has increased in interdisciplinary sexuality research (Rule & Twinley, 2020), some researchers in various disciplines continue to view sex work from a narrow, pathology-focused lens (Burnes, Long, & Schept, 2012; Dawson & Burnes, 2018; Nuttbrock, 2018). This lens results in researchers rarely prioritizing sex workers' voices. In addition, researchers rarely collaborate with sex workers to construct a study's design, resulting in faulty methodology. With such a lens, research on experiences of sex workers is often based on samples derived from either incarceration facilities or escorts who are highly resourced (Sawicki, Meffert, Read, & Heinz, 2019), creating an inaccurate lens through which sexologists conceptualize sex work in research and practice. Such methodological bias (e.g., convenience samples, no control groups) in sex work research (Burnes, 2017; Sanders, Scoular, Campbell, Pitcher, & Cunningham, 2018) continually highlights that PAR is a necessary paradigm with which to accurately create knowledge about sex work.

Not only is PAR necessary to help address such methodological concerns in sex work research, but PAR can also further assist researchers in recognizing their own subjectivity in their work. There is a growing need to understand the PAR process and the impact of sex work research on the researchers, the participants, and the relationship between all parties. Although counselors have been trained to engage re-

lationally with participants in traditional research paradigms, many researchers may not understand how to navigate traditional understandings of "relationships with participants" from a PAR framework. How researchers themselves engage with and understand multiple levels of oppression (e.g., classism, racism, sexism, erotophobia) is relatively absent from research focusing on sex workers. Further, given the potential for some researchers to hold unchecked power and privilege, researchers need to understand the intricacies of a research framework that prioritizes social justice for a PAR study to succeed (Hargons et al., 2021).

Information related to the practicalities of PAR with sex workers is still a nascent topic of scholarship. Not documenting such important process variables may result in further harm of sex workers by researchers when relationship, hierarchy, and oppression are not explicitly prioritized as part of the PAR design (Burnes, Rojas, Delgado, & Watkins, 2017). Not only is there a need to document the PAR process, but there is a specific call to understand how PAR with sex work results in distinct methods, experiences, and actions. The need for writings to understand these various facets of PAR process is critical to ensure that researchers infuse relational and ethical procedures into their scholarship focused on sex work.

Process Themes in PAR Research

In response to the aforementioned needs, this article begins to document specific themes in PAR research with sex workers to understand better the ways in which counseling and psychology researchers can understand and engage with PAR process. The author presents four vignettes from his work with a four-year research program, consisting of two studies using a PAR process that investigated resilience in sex work communities (Burnes, n.d.; Burnes et al., 2017). Accompanying each vignette is a discussion of process themes and recommendations for broadened understandings of counseling research and for the practice of PAR. The author then provides practical strategies for centering process in a PAR paradigm that connect all four vignettes.

Sex Work with PAR Design

As part of our participatory action design that investigated aspects of resilience in communities of North American sex workers, a team of four mental health professionals created a series of five fora for sex workers to come and give feedback about topics that they wanted to study and what was important to them. Each of these fora was in a different city. Sixty-five sex workers participated in these fora and were given food, vouchers for mental health care, and condoms in exchange for participation. "Paula" self-identified as a 28-year-old African American woman who was a sex worker and attended one forum. Throughout the forum process, Paula

appeared skeptical. At one point about halfway through the proceedings, Paula stated:

I don't know how this is going to work. I mean, I can just speak for myself. If I join this research, I'm questioning a system that's in place. I could lose my job and my physical safety could be threatened. I don't think you fancy researchers can come in here and say the same thing – all you have to do is to move on to another project, right?

Upon reflection of Paula's comments, the research team used the forum space to have a conversation with Paula and other sex workers involved in the project about the potential risks involved. For some sex workers, removing themselves from certain parts of the project helped them to feel safer. For others, working with the research team to devise a safety plan helped them to feel more secure about their involvement in the research process. Regular process checks in subsequent parts of the studies helped to maintain these feelings of increased safety for all parties.

Paula's statements highlight a central tension of conducting PAR with sex workers, a community in which risk for physical violence is often present (Logie et al., 2017). Researchers should think about how ethics in the counseling field, such as justice, self-determination, and integrity, can aid in increasing safety for sex workers as research participants (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014). More specifically, sex workers' participation and collaboration with health care researchers can put them at risk in their own communities. Malcom-Piqueux (2015) noted the importance of PAR's being a catalyst for social change; however, participation in PAR could threaten the safety and well-being of certain participants. Such danger is an important factor that is often left out of discussions of PAR research. Further, an intersectional framework will enable the PAR researcher to understand how sex workers' identities may add additional stressors to their work and may put their safety at increased risk. Researchers should focus on building trust and explicitly naming such risk in their informed consent process (both in writing and verbally when starting the research study), which are hallmark techniques of qualitative research (Ahmed, Vandrevalla, Hendy, Kelly, & Ala, 2019; Livingston & Perkins, 2018). Thus, researchers should consider creating safety plans for research participants worried about the logistical and very real consequences of engaging in research outside of their respective communities.

Although traditional research paradigms often have traditional relationships between researcher and participant (Heppner, Wampold, Owen, Thompson, & Wang, 2016), researchers need to understand the complex relationships when working in a PAR paradigm for the effectiveness of the project. Specifically, with-in a PAR paradigm, the need

for researchers to collaborate with participants before the research questions of the study are designed insists that the researcher relinquish control of the study's design, goals, and objectives to the participants. Therefore, there is a critical need for the researcher to "let go of their role" that has been traditionally defined as one of power. As sex worker-participants become co-researchers, researchers must share adequate power with them to understand how they can use their work to foster their own resilience, empower their communities, and create social change (Ochocka, Janzen, & Nelson, 2002). Such sharing of power should include a regular "process check" between all co-researchers (including the original researcher) to make sure that all decisions are being made collaboratively.

In addition, like in the case of Paula, the researchers must understand the need to value the unique contexts of their PAR co-researchers that may be dangerous. Some sex workers may feel threatened by members of their community for joining a PAR research team. These fears of participants and their sex work communities—of retaliation, violence, and abuse—may be real and not solved readily. The researcher can see such fear as a coping mechanism and a resilience strategy from a community that may have traditionally been exploited or pathologized by research (Močnik, 2019). Creating information about PAR (e.g., websites with QR codes, pamphlets, FAQ sheets, etc.) for family members, co-workers, and community members of co-researchers is necessary to achieve these goals. For the author of this article, participation in community events, engagement with community centers and spaces, and collaborating in acts of social justice with the communities that are a focus of research helped to ease these coping-focused responses. As these various issues with design allude, PAR requires the need for researchers to conceptualize and implement adequate amounts of time prior to and during the project design and data collection.

Data Collection in PAR with Sex Workers

As part of our participatory action design that investigated aspects of resilience in communities of North American sex workers, a team of co-researchers of academic sexologists and self-identified sex workers began to collect data in four different cities. "Claudia" was a self-identified Mexican American, transgender female, who was the first sex worker that the first author interviewed as part of the data collection process. When asked about suggestions for recruitment of participants, Claudia laughed. "Facebook isn't going to work with this crowd. You're going to have to think about hanging outside of the vans." "The vans", or a series of HIV mobile testing vans that often operated between 11pm-5am nightly, were often parked far from public transportation and in an area of the city to which law enforcement did not routinely respond. The first author reflected on the challenges

of amending the project's application to the Internal Review Board (IRB) and how difficult it might be to have the IRB approve soliciting sex workers to participate in a research study as part of the data collection process.

Claudia participated in the study on a Sunday evening; the following Wednesday, she was found dead in a dumpster in a large Mexican city near her town of residence. For three months after the project ended, multiple members of the research team experienced sadness, grief, and fear for other participants. The first author brought in a consultant with an expertise on grief for the research team, and members were able to pause their work and process their own experiences and emotions. In addition, the first author was able to access his own therapeutic support through both individual and group counseling sessions. He gave referrals to all team members, and referrals for low-cost services were provided to community members. Team members also created a memory circle with community members in which people came together in a community space to stand together, share experiences of Claudia, sing songs, eat food, and create a small memory book to give to Claudia's family of choice.

When undergoing data collection process in a PAR paradigm, it is important for the research team to understand the important nuances of collecting data for a project geared toward social change. Specifically, researchers beginning to engage in PAR may not understand the difficulty of collecting data with participants and communities who are systemically, historically, and/or culturally marginalized (Singh, Richmond, & Burnes, 2013). First, many institutional review boards that review research projects may consider certain collection strategies and certain sites for data collection "dangerous" or "at risk" (Levine et al., 2004; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). However, there are problems with avoiding such sites because they are places that are central gathering spaces or sources of resilience and support for sex workers. For example, the author's research team often collected data outside of mobile STI/STD testing vans from 2-4 a.m. in nondescript locations. These working environments allowed the team to meet participants in places where they felt safe and were able to build trust with the team members in order to participate.

As novice researchers begin to co-construct PAR projects with sex work communities, it is important to consider the extreme combination of resilience and vulnerability that occurs when researching marginalized communities (Chughtai et al., 2020). Specifically, the need for researchers to grapple with the practicalities of marginalized communities in which they are conducting research is paramount. Research participants and co-researchers who are sex workers could be survivors of violence, undergo sickness due to lack of access to health care, and/or survive incidents of ongoing, insidious oppression that can occur during the implementation phase

of the research project.

When addressing such a theme in PAR research, the research team should implement two concurrent responses: one response to help participants and the other to help themselves. When helping participants, although such incidents of sickness and violence may be common to other members of a particular community, it will probably appear inhumane for the researcher not to respond with care and compassion. As such, researchers should move beyond asking about a specific stage or moment in participants' lives and allow for them to set the agenda for the conversation themselves (Guha, 2019, p. 512). Further, a lack of reaction by a researcher could recapitulate oppressive empirical processes and lead a sex worker to think that a researcher does not care about the community being studied, but rather just sees the community as "work." Providing spaces to address moments of grief, sadness, shock, or fear can help participants to build resilience in the face of violence and oppression. Such spaces can involve research team members and community members engaging in group debriefs, providing referrals to local agencies and organizations for outside support, creating rituals (shrines, memory circles, etc.), and encouraging activities to build resilience.

With such difficult contextual factors impacting research, researchers should also respond by taking care of each other seeking out their own support (e.g., research consultation groups, research supervision, personal therapy). Counseling professionals can encourage students to access resources outside of their immediate work environment to increase resilience against potential vicarious traumatization (e.g., the student counseling center, low-no cost community referrals for mental health support). Having specific debrief conversations with the research team is vital to ensuring the well-being of researchers who have not experienced the result of such difficulties prior to the current moment. As a preventative measure, researchers beginning a PAR research project that utilizes a PAR research paradigm may want to form a research consultation group before the project begins so that they have support for all phases of the project.

Data Analysis in PAR with Sex Workers

As part of our participatory action design, the team of academic sexologist co-researchers and self-identified sex workers also analyzed data. "Nyeema" was a self-identified African American female sex worker, who was a part of the team and who engaged with data analysis. The team engaged in rigorous qualitative analysis with multiple phases. In the first phase, pairs of team members came together to code data. Nyeema struggled with the analysis process in multiple arenas. She often would question the coding process in terms of the researchers' bias and discomfort related to explicit sexual acts performed by the participants. Nyeema also would bring unique perspectives about the

coding process and challenge the conceptual framework of the project. During one meeting of the entire team, Nyeema announced that she was afraid she would have to leave the project. "I just don't think that I belong on this team," Nyeema reported. "I feel like everything that I say challenges everybody else's viewpoints, so I must not be doing this right. I just feel...kind of like I don't get it even though I keep trying."

The research team members validated and normalized the multiple forces that appeared to be leading Nyeema to leave the project. The team had open discussions about the importance of different perspectives in coding data, and that, "challenging viewpoints" was a good thing in this research space (even if it felt bad or disrespectful in other spaces). Many members of the team who also identified as sex workers reframed some of Nyeema's doubts about her differing view-points as strengths, encouraging her that her experiences in fact added to the rigor of the project. Feeling empowered, Nyeema stayed with the project. The researchers also decided to create pairs (called "pods") in which team members from an academic setting paired with a team member from outside of the academic setting so that each pair could provide support and challenge to each other throughout the remainder of the analysis process.

As part of the PAR process, researchers should understand the difficulty and complexity in sharing the data analysis process with sex workers who may not understand some nuanced processes in counseling research. Counseling professionals should juxtapose the idea that participant-peer researchers learn rigorous data analysis with the idea that they may bring unique and needed ways of deconstructing covert rules and processes of knowledge production from a traditional academic lens (Tanner, 2018). The bringing together of these ideas results in tensions that are not new in the process of deconstructing research paradigms (DeVault, 2017; Olsen, 2017); however, they become a critical element when equalizing power dynamics from a PAR framework. The benefits of including sex workers as peer researchers can result in needed discussions about the erotophobia that may lurk in the academy, as well as about the need to deconstruct traditional ways of making meaning of data that are confined to the ivory tower (Lobo et al., 2020).

To address these tensions, researchers can highlight them early in the analysis process. Scheduled conversations like the one featuring Nyeema above allow all members of the research team to deconstruct such tensions and empower each other to bring up such conflicts between values and process as they occur. Researchers can also encourage impromptu conversations at any point in the research process to enable such collaborative deconstruction. Such conversations may also bring up other research process variables that may feel uncomfortable for co-researchers in other aspects of their lives. For example, some sex worker co-researchers may

not feel comfortable disagreeing with specific data interpretations, as providing alternative viewpoints (like in the case of Nyeema shown above) may be seen as disrespectful or like the co-researcher "did something wrong." researchers should reframe these concerns as strengths and resilience of the co-researchers, and that co-researchers should feel comfortable to bring up such issues consistently. Researchers should also validate and discuss such differing experiences with respect and humility as part of research team check-ins. Researchers can also address such tensions with data analysis by pairing non-academic researchers with researchers for the duration of the analysis process. Regardless of what type of analysis is happening in the PAR study (e.g., naming factors in a factor analysis, deciding variables to remove in a stepwise regression, naming codes in qualitative data, synthesizing qualitative and quantitative data in a mixed-methods analysis), having researchers with different relationships to the academy and the community pair with one another can be very helpful in ensuring rigor without silencing the unique voices of co-researchers whose experiences may differ from others on their team. Specifically in qualitative analysis, sharing power as part of the data analysis process (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009; Richards, 2021) through pairing and auditing sections of transcripts can be helpful in ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the depth of understanding hallmark to the qualitative paradigm.

Data Sharing in PAR with Sex Workers

At the end of the study's analysis project, the team of co-researchers of academic sexologists and self-identified sex workers also began to ask how we wanted to share the results with the larger professional and personal communities. "Lion" was a self-identified White gay male sex worker, who was a part of the team and who engaged with data collection, analysis, and helped to share findings. Lion listened quietly as other members of the team began to brainstorm ideas about how to share the results with the larger sex work community. Lion noted, "I am worried that sharing this information may put some people who participated at risk." He spoke about how the re-searchers needed to be careful about where we shared results, and how some of these results may speak truth to power. Lion noted that these results may perhaps anger brothel owners and procurers, which could in turn result in more violence in sex work communities. During one meeting of the entire team, Lion announced that he did not want to be involved with directly sharing or speaking about the results for fear of his own safety. The team began to recognize both the complexities of openly sharing data in workshops and fliers and also of continuing to protect the safety of participants through constructed safeguards.

Borgman (2012) highlighted the importance of sharing data and findings with participants and concurrently identifies tensions in sharing data with participants. These writings

highlight the difficulty of collecting data within communities but not sharing the product of these data in the communities where the data were originally collected (Borgman, 2012). As noted in the vignettes of Paula and of Lion, such a process can increase fear and can create community-level distrust of social scientists, even when they have social justice-focused interests at heart.

Many individuals may want to engage or have access to knowledge that is created by the study, but due to issues of economic or class disparity lack access to journals or libraries housed within institutions of higher education. Thus, to have an individual take data from a community and not give it back in the form of results or implications of the study can go against the social justice nature of the study or PAR as a research paradigm.

It is important for researchers engaging in PAR to think critically about how to share research with communities in which they are engaged. Specifically, strategies for sharing data and results should not come from research protocols, but instead come from the communities that are being studied (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, & Neumann, 2011). PAR researchers should begin to assess and observe ways in which communities share information generally to figure out how data can inform community norms and values with humility and respect. Providing information in already existing community gathering spaces—forums, town halls, coffee shops—can provide researchers with the space and social capital needed to share this information. If not, researchers should consider making fliers, presentations, or online resources and distributing QR codes, infographics, websites, fliers, or postcards in communities so that individuals may have access to the various information that was constructed with them or in their community.

Implications for Counseling Research Training

The vignettes and corresponding commentary above begin to help counseling researchers using PAR paradigms and methods to think critically about the way that their process engages with sex workers. These various quandaries may also begin to impact how researchers engage in their own reflection and continuing education in their role as researchers. Further, researchers in counseling and counselor education programs (as well as other related social science disciplines) can further educate trainees about the PAR process. The following four strategies can be helpful for research supervisors, mentors, and faculty to consider as they construct learning about PAR.

Learning Outlines that are Intentionally Interdisciplinary

As faculty and applied research supervisors and mentors in counseling are constructing syllabi, instructors should create learning activities about research process. Instructors

of research courses at both the master's and doctoral levels should construct course learning objectives that help their students learn about research process. Further, sexuality-focused courses in counseling curricula could also include assignments that focus on research study design to assess students' learning. Licensed counselors and counselor educators can also provide and engage in continuing education seminars to ensure that they learn about and reflect on such research process variables (Burnes, 2017). Faculty who lead research teams and research labs can also use the vignettes in this article (or vignettes with comparable content) to begin to shift how trainees may think about their relationships to sex worker communities that they are researching. In these learning spaces, instructors and research team leaders can validate students' uncertainty, as to linger in the fraught spaces of uncertainty and collectivity are some of the most important processes in which researchers-in-training learn PAR work.

Such conversations may naturally gravitate into researchers' exploration of their own identities of privilege. If not, counseling researchers and educators may want to facilitate a conversation about privilege and oppression in the context of a research design class. If the instructor feels that facilitating such a conversation is outside their scope of practice (Lechuga, Clerc, & Howell, 2009) it can be helpful to bring in a guest facilitator or a colleague who can help learners to gain insight into how their own identities may impact their training and professional development (Love, Gaynor, & Blessett, 2016).

Understanding Timing in PAR Research Process

Methodology-oriented PAR curricula and service-learning frameworks run the risk of creating unilateral, semester-long relationships with the participants such as sex workers in which the timing of interactions and contact are dictated by class schedules rather than by the daily and ensuring urgency of injustice (Ritterbusch, 2019, p.1301). As counseling researchers need longer periods of time to construct trust with communities of sex workers, supervisors of counseling students' research should provide these researchers-in-training with accurate timetables about PAR research and how these schedules may contradict traditional academic requirements. Further, researchers at all stages of the professional lifespan—students, early career professionals, and experienced researchers who may be utilizing PAR for the first time—and their supporters should also account for additional time needed to process traumas, resilience, and occurrences for sex workers in dangerous working conditions.

Researchers new to PAR in mental health disciplines may be frustrated by the length of time it takes to complete studies, especially when they have excitement and motivation to learn more about the knowledge base that they are helping to

build. Consultants to the PAR process, such as supervisors of counseling student research and consultants for experienced researchers, can help to sculpt these mismatches between perceived and actual timing by continuously amending and updating re-search plans. Likewise, sex worker-participants may also become frustrated with bureaucracy related to academic and institutional requirements associated with knowledge production in counseling research. Researchers can brainstorm talking points to discuss with their research participants about the process. In some cases, role playing these conversations (in which the students are themselves and the counselor educator is a PAR research participant) can be helpful to give the researcher-in-training a chance to practice having conversations about timing.

Support and Community as PAR Researchers in Sexuality

As sexuality researchers may often work alone or in solidarity with their respective PAR projects, it is important to acknowledge that this isolation may have negative impact on the researcher (and the participants and project, by proxy). Engaging with vastly different (and sometimes hostile) environments and communities as research sites can have an impact on counseling researchers, and such emotional taxation may take a distinct toll that has yet to be investigated in the empirical literatures of counseling and related mental health disciplines. Finding a supportive network of colleagues engaging in PAR-related studies can decrease isolation, provide accountability to the essence of PAR work, and provide consultation for ethics and process-related questions (Gale & Evans, 2007). Further, given the unique stressors that occur within PAR paradigms, researchers may find such a group to be a place where other group members can normalize and validate their unique questions and experiences.

Some PAR researchers may not be trained or have specific competence in areas related to sexuality. Thus, some PAR researchers focused on sexuality-related phenomena may find peer consultation groups focused on sexuality content using multiple paradigms (not just PAR) to also be helpful in their need for peer support. Such a decision can also help to reduce the incident of the researcher encountering incidents of erotophobia and sex-negativity in the consultation process. Counselor educators' engagement in these types of groups and explicitly referencing them can also be superb modeling for students about the need for continued consultation in later phases in their work as professionals in the field.

PAR Process in Assessment and Evaluation of Research Competence

Competencies as a researcher is paramount to the formation of a strong counselor identity (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016). In ensuring these competen-

cies, counselor educators must devise mechanisms to assess researchers' competencies across the professional lifespan (as students, as pre-licensed professionals, as licensed professionals, and as faculty-educators-research supervisors; CACREP, 2016). As such, attention to PAR process should also be a point of evaluation when instructors are evaluating students' learning in research courses and capstone projects related to sex work (e.g., theses, dissertations, etc.). Rubrics that include criteria assessing counseling students' attention to various elements of process in a research project will ensure that PAR with all sexuality phenomena is done benevolently and with the full amount of justice and integrity in which the paradigm was intended. Research supervisors should ask open-ended questions in oral hearings and comprehensive examinations of student learning about PAR and how these specific content-focused issues are addressed in order to ensure that they reliably evaluate training in sexuality and social justice.

Counseling professionals should also continue to think about the assessment and evaluation of PAR process in sexuality research that occurs in other domains of their work. Reviewing of manuscripts, proposals for conference presentations, and grant applications may often not have adequate space or structure to account for the difficulty of such PAR process. As sexuality-focused researchers have historically been known to critique and question traditional paradigms about social science research (Sakaluk, 2019), the need for sexologists to advocate for the inclusion of such structures is needed. Further, given the need for more intersectional frameworks in sexuality related research (Alexander, 2019), the need for sexologists to continue to advocate for the reshaping of research competency in counseling is vital. Finally, future counseling competencies related to human sexuality (Mollen & Abbott, 2022; Zeglin et al., 2017) could also address the need for PAR as a possible research methodology and the unique processes needed for conducting research in human sexuality (and specifically with people involved with the sex industry).

The writings above help to address ways that counseling researchers and researchers-in-training can specifically begin to think about their own ways of utilizing PAR into their research with sex workers. As researchers continue to co-construct knowledge with communities, attention to the process of such co-construction simultaneously increases in need and value. How researchers attend to these process dynamics—and, in turn, train students, mentees, and supervisors to attend to such process—should continue to be fundamental points that are brought into research development. With this eventual integration, sex-positive counselors can use the resulting research to advocate for sexual liberation at all ecological levels of various systems while also helping PAR to continue to increase in rigor, outcomes, and impact.

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